

Duties and Responsibilities: As an Animal Care Inspector for an assigned geographic area, the incumbent is responsible for highly technical inspection duties pertaining to the physical and psychological well being of animals covered by the Animal Welfare Act. Covered animals include common mammals such as dogs, cats, and farm animals; plus exotic mammals including lions, tigers, bears, elephants, primates, and marine mammals that are owned by or are in the custody of dealers, exhibitors, carriers, and intermediate handlers. The primary objective of inspections is to assure compliance with all provisions of the Animal Welfare Act. Authority includes the formal documentation of compliance and noncompliance, plus monitoring corrective action. A primary part of the inspection effort, however, is the development of cooperative relationships that enable the inspector to work with facility and business personnel to assure quality care of the subject animals. Specific duties are as follows:

-- In the performance of inspections, the incumbent observes animals for signs of poor health, abuse, or any kind of mistreatment or inadequate care. Animals' behavior, including their reaction to the inspector is often an indicator of overall health and well being and is carefully observed. The adequacy of shelter, including an assessment of heating, cooling, ventilation, lighting, protection from the sun, and similar matters are assessed in the inspections. The inspector determines if building materials, design, and construction of the shelter are appropriate for the species and will not cause harm to the animals. Size of the facility and, in some cases, opportunity for the animals to exercise are also considerations. Sanitation is a major aspect of all inspections. This encompasses the basic cleanliness of the area in which the animal is housed, plus adjoining areas, particularly where food is stored. Pest control is a related item that is evaluated. Inspections include questioning facility employees about the diets of animals, review of records pertaining to diet, and an inspection of food preparation facilities. Checks are made to ensure that food is properly stored and handled and that food waste is disposed of in a timely and proper manner. The inspector examines facility records to assess their adequacy and to identify health problems and, in some instances, to trace the origin and movement of animals. Throughout the inspection, the incumbent is alert to any additional signs of health problems, such as the presence of medication or notes indicating that an animal is on medication. Through interviews and records, assures the adequacy of veterinary medical care being provided. Concern is with a long-term program of regular care including vaccinations and examinations, plus appropriate responses to specific medical problems that develop. Assures that other technical requirements, such as requirements for perimeter fences in exotic animal facilities, are met. In all inspections, pays particular attention to corrective action taken to remedy problems identified in previous inspections.

-- Some inspections are done in response to complaints and tips alleging improper treatment of animals. Such leads are received from a variety of sources including animal rights groups and the general public. In some instances animal exhibitors, dealers, and brokers will initiate complaints about others in the same or related businesses.

-- Through recurring industry contacts, complaints, newspaper articles, personal visits to events such as fairs and community festivals, and observations made in the course of routine travel, seeks unlicensed dealers and exhibitors. Interviews suspected unlicensed operators to ascertain the nature of their business and to determine if a license is required and, if so, the type of license they must have. Informs operators of licensing requirement and provides relevant information on procedures to obtain licenses.

-- Works closely with new and unlicensed dealers and exhibitors seeking licenses. This often involves an initial, informal discussion and evaluation in which the inspector provides the potential licensee with a very general, preliminary assessment of the adequacy of existing facilities and business plans. Guidance on the magnitude of required improvements and their relative costs is provided to enable the potential licensee to determine the viability of the business. In all cases, a complete formal inspection is performed by the incumbent of this position before a license can be granted.

-- On a continuous basis, and as a part of virtually all inspection work, educates and instructs animal dealers, exhibitors, carriers, intermediate handlers, and brokers on the proper procedures in the humane care, handling, and transportation of animals. Such education includes the importance and benefits derived from good husbandry practices. As requested, represents the agency at meetings of industry and other concerned public and private groups to promote the Animal Welfare program. Identifies areas where policies are not understood by affected groups and calls these to the attention of agency management. Provides feedback to management regarding changes in policy or regulations.

-- Responsible for the complete and accurate documentation of the results of all inspections, consistent with prescribed agency forms and reporting procedures. In documenting noncompliance, is cognizant of the possibility that the agency may need to eventually issue formal violation notices and that the matter may be pursued through formal, legal channels by the Regulatory Enforcement personnel of REAC. With these possibilities in mind, the investigator exercises a great deal of discretion in the detail of documentation prepared, being particularly attentive to the cases representing the most severe instances of noncompliance. In addition to preparing documentation that will support formal legal procedures, the inspector will often take photographs to provide further evidence. The incumbent is also subject to be called as a witness in formal legal processes.

-- Maintains liaison with other federal, state, and local government agencies, primarily on problem cases in which the inspector observes matters that are primarily under the jurisdiction of other agencies or, in the judgment of the inspector, warrant the attention of the other government bodies.

-- Performs a variety of administrative tasks related to inspection work. These include maintaining lists of facilities in assigned area, scheduling inspections based on need, and assuring the assigned motor vehicle is properly maintained.

Factor 1: Knowledge Required

Must have a high degree of technical knowledge regarding the physical and behavioral characteristics and care requirements of various species of common animals. Must be knowledgeable of common animal diseases and have the ability to identify disease symptoms and evidence of health problems such as malnutrition, presence of parasites, improper handling, and virtually any type of neglect. Must have sufficient knowledge of veterinary medicine to judge the basic adequacy of medical care programs.

Must have a general familiarity with several exotic species and be able to identify obvious signs of improper care.

Must have a detailed knowledge of the provisions of the Animal Welfare Act's requirements concerning the treatment of animals, including sanitation, lighting, space requirements, handling, etc.

Must have knowledge of the history, goals, and practices of multiple industries and businesses including animal dealers, animal acts, zoos, circuses and air carriers.

Factor 2: Supervisory Controls

The employee's supervisor is the Animal Care Sector Supervisor.

The employee is geographically separated from the Sector office and has broad latitude for planning and scheduling work, based on minimum agency inspection requirements, and based on the employee's judgment regarding the inspection frequency appropriate for the individual facility. The latter of these factors involves size and complexity of operations, pending noncompliance items, and the overall history of a facility's compliance with the Animal Welfare Act. The employee is also expected to schedule work in a manner that makes the most efficient use of time and travel resources. The inspector does provide the sector supervisor with an informational copy of weekly itineraries; but the supervisor is not normally involved in the work scheduling. Exceptions occur when the Sector Office receives information about the need for prompt action on a particular case and the supervisor directs the employee to fit a particular inspection into his/her itinerary.

All types of inspections are made without technical assistance. When conducting inspections, the employee must make a myriad of on-the-spot decisions with respect to the citing of noncompliance items. Exceptions to this degree of independence and decision-making occur in a small percentage of cases that present medical problems requiring the analysis of a veterinarian. In these circumstances the sector office is contacted so that a REAC veterinarian may assist. Other guidance received is limited to very general instructions pertaining to agency priorities and changes in provisions of the Animal Welfare Act.

Work is reviewed for adherence to policies, instructions, precedents, and compliance with the provisions of the Animal Welfare Act. This is accomplished through spot checks of inspection reports and related materials submitted to the Sector office and through periodic (once or twice per year) on-the-job evaluations by the Animal Care Specialist or Sector Supervisor.

Factor 3: Guidelines

The primary guideline is Title 9, Code of Federal Regulations, Parts 1,2, and 3, which implement the Animal Welfare Act. There are also supplemental agency policies and operating procedures. Substantial judgment and experience is required to apply and interpret these guidelines. Inspections routinely require the incumbent to make highly subjective on-the-spot interpretations.

The problems in guideline interpretation are compounded by a great deal of variation in specificity. For some types of animals, guidelines are detailed and specific, but difficult to apply because of the number of requirements, the degree of detail, and apparent conflicts in different sections. For some types of animals, specific guidelines are nonexistent, requiring the inspector to exercise an extraordinary degree of interpretation of very general provisions of the Animal Welfare Act and regulations (9CFR).

An additional complication is a high frequency of changes in the provisions of the Animal Welfare Act. Changes that are occurring generally are broadening the scope of inspections and imposing new technical demands.

Factor 4: Complexity

The responsibilities of this position involve a series of related but highly varied tasks involving the protection of animals. The numerous variations in circumstances necessitate different approaches and have a very large impact on the way that individual inspections are handled. Significant variables include: (1) type of inspection; i.e. whether it is a routine check, a pre licensing inspection, a visit to a suspected unlicensed business, etc.; (2) facility or business type; (3) type of animals; (4) size and complexity of facility; (5) history of compliance problems; and (6) economic/business status; i.e. whether an inspected facility is primarily geared for financial profit or, for example, a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting animals.

In making inspections, the incumbent must carefully balance the specific requirements of the law with practical judgments on the true well being of the animals and the degree to which facility or business management is making a good-faith effort to comply. While full compliance is the objective, the inspector must be cognizant of the fact that an overzealous and rigid approach to inspections can result in the inappropriate closing of facilities and actually cause significant harm to its animals. In some cases the inspector must adopt a long term strategy of prioritizing compliance problems and officially citing them in a sequence and pace that upholds the intent of the law, but at the same time does not present unbearable financial demands on the business or facility.

Inspections performed in response to complaints are particularly sensitive, requiring the employee to exercise exceptional tact and judgment. In some instances complaints are valid; in other instances they are totally unfounded and may be based on personal vendettas.

Factor 5: Scope and Effect

The work performed by the incumbent directly determines the success of agency efforts to protect animals covered by the Animal Welfare Act. Decisions made with respect to the identification of compliance problems often have a significant economic impact on the owners of businesses or facilities; this impact sometimes includes whether or not a particular operation goes into or remains in business. The formal identification of noncompliance items sometimes leads to formal legal procedures against violators.

Factor 6: Personal Contacts

In the course of inspections, the incumbent has contact with animal dealers, air carrier personnel, animal handlers, exhibitors, and employees of inspected facilities. In addition has occasional contacts with REAC Animal Care veterinarians, REAC investigators, officials of other government agencies, animal protection groups, and the media.

Factor 7: Purpose of Contacts

Contacts during inspections involve soliciting information, sometimes through persistent questioning that may require novel approaches. These contacts also involve providing technical information to educate on appropriate care of animals.

Contacts with other personnel in REAC and with representatives of other government bodies primarily involve the exchange of information about particular inspection cases.

Contacts with animal protection organizations are to explain provisions of the Animal Welfare Act and agency efforts to enforce that law.

Media contacts are to provide the public with general animal welfare information or to respond to inquiries about the status of individual cases that have a high degree of public interest.

Through ongoing inspection efforts, the inspector attempts to establish and maintain good relations with dealers, exhibitors, and business owners. However, the nature of the work is such that substantial conflict and hostility sometimes surface, particularly in cases involving serious noncompliance problems. The employee may also face a less than cordial response in appearances before organizations. Media contacts and court appearances are also inherently stressful.

Factor 8: Physical Demands

The work involves inspections of facilities of dealers, exhibitors, brokers, handlers, etc. Moderate to strenuous physical effort is required, particularly in inspecting large facilities that may be located on rugged terrain. The employee must drive a motor vehicle to inspections.

Factor 9: Work Environment

Work is performed primarily at the inspected facilities. There is exposure to contagious, infectious, or communicable diseases, plus the ordinary threats of animal bites and other injuries associated with animal work.